

Case Study: Active in Development Aid (ADA)

Background of ADA

Active in Development Aid (ADA) is non-profit women-led organization (WLO) that works in Somalia and Kenya. It was founded in 1992 by a group of Somali professionals.

While partnering with Trócaire in Gedo Region of Somalia and implementing Protection and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) projects, ADA learned about an opportunity for a WLO to be the co-chair of the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) working group (known in Somalia as the GBV Reference Group) at sub-national level in Gedo. The selection process for the WLO to assume that role was not competitive, given that there were no other WLOs working in the region of Dollo-Gedo. Initially, Trócaire held conversations with ADA to determine their level of interest. Once contracted, ADA appointed a staff member who could assume leadership in the coordination role. Although ADA was a member of the WASH Cluster in Elwak, this was the first time for ADA to be involved in GBV coordination, as the Gedo GBV working group sat in Dollo town, which is a considerable distance from ADA's location in Elwak in Gedo region.

At the outset of this initiative, the GBV Working Group in Dollo-Gedo was co-chaired by Socio-Economic Development and Human Rights Organization (SEDHURO) and Trócaire, neither of which were WLOs. As a result of this project, Trócaire stepped back from the role and ADA became a co-chair of this working group, alongside SEDHURO.

ADA's experience in the project

Two members from ADA (the Director and Protection Officer) attended the first coordination meeting, held in Dollo on 17th June 2022, where ADA was introduced to the GBV actors in attendance as the new co-chair.



“At the start of the meeting, I questioned myself how I was going to co-chair the GBV working group, but the first coordination meeting we participated in was very receiving. That gave me the courage that we were able to co-chair, and I was supported by the Trócaire team.”

Yusra Ali Adan – Director, ADA

Having the opportunity to co-chair the GBV Working Group enabled ADA to sit at the table with male-led organizations, discuss GBV issues in the region, and strategize on how to support each other and improve GBV prevention and response services.

“The GBV coordination role was a good experience and challenging. As ADA it was our first time to assume the role of GBV coordination. It was very interesting because it improved our capacity and image as a women-led organization in the region.”

Marlia Ibrahim, Protection Officer – ADA

For the GBV Officer from ADA attached to this project, confidence to lead the coordination meetings has been built over time. Key roles that they have taken on include chairing and taking minutes of the coordination meetings.

Challenges experienced by ADA included inconsistent attendance of GBV Working Group members and not always having the right people in the room to make meaningful contributions to the meeting proceedings. Initially, the women members attending were shy to participate.

At the commencement of the project, there were challenges around how co-leading responsibilities would be shared. However, a consultation process took place to review the terms of reference for the co-chair role and to clarify responsibilities for both agencies. Once they came to understand how the co-chairing roles could be supportive of one another and the sector more broadly, the two organizations worked well together.

Impacts for ADA and the sector

For GBV Survivors and community members: Changes related to having ADA as the co-chair:

WLOs are key actors in service delivery and their integration in coordination is vital. The protection and safety of women and girls can be strengthened through coordinated, collective, and sustained action. Having strong coordination and regular meetings assists GBV actors to apply and adhere to common standards and guidelines to ensure that communities receive the highest quality of services that support their health and safety.

Updating of the GBV Referral pathway in Dollo every six months coincided with the inclusion of ADA as co-chair. This ensures that the communities are aware of and have access to available services. The coordination and collaboration between the GBV actors helped facilitate easy access to the referral system and improved the quality of service delivery for the survivors in the region.

Having a WLO in a leadership role provided a good example for other women who attended the GBV sub-cluster meetings that women can be effective leaders. ADA supported fellow women GBV actors to be change agents and challenge preconceived notions on women's participation and leadership.

For the GBV sector: Changes related to including ADA in GBV coordination:

In the monthly meetings, ADA called on other GBV actors to provide regular updates, and this resulted in the creation of a database that showed the GBV trends in the region. This database allows GBV actors to note the needs of the communities, thus resulting in appropriate tailored responsive services, including referrals and follow-up. Having participated in the monthly capacity strengthening sessions offered by Trócaire throughout the project, ADA applied the acquired skills in the coordination mechanism. This led to improved collaboration and coordination among actors in the GBV sector through shared information, services provided, and addressing on-the-ground challenges at the organizational level.



“GBV is best addressed when multiple sectors within the organizations work together to create and implement united prevention, response, and risk mitigation plans.”

Yusra Ali Adan – Director, ADA

For ADA: Changes due to co-chairing the GBV coordination mechanism:

Before ADA took on this coordination role, very few organizations in the region knew who ADA was, but after ADA began co-chairing, their visibility increased. Other opportunities for ADA to assume leadership in other spaces have emerged. For example, ADA currently sits on an advisory group for a USAID-funded project on GBV and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), along with the Global GBV Area of Responsibility, Global Women’s Institute, and Trócaire. ADA is also a member of the Global MHPSS Task Force. Further, ADA sits on Trócaire’s newly created Partner Advisory Group, which is a six-member advisory structure comprised of civil society partner organizations that influence the strategic direction of Trócaire’s work on partnership and localization. ADA mobilized GBV actors in Elwak to mark the 16 Days of Activism against GBV and held a radio talk shows on GBV concerns in Gedo, aired by Radio Kismayo, where they called for an end to GBV in the area.

ADA also led on initiatives (such as the updating of the referral pathway and the group’s work plan, the identification of gaps in service provision, and the inclusion of GBV considerations in the inter-agency drought assessment in Gedo) that helped to build valuable leadership and coordination skills and experience within the organization. This has resulted in other knock-on benefits for ADA and strengthened its network of GBV actors.

ADA’s GBV co-leadership role in Dollo and Elwak in Gedo, and as a member of the WASH cluster in Elwak, has provided an opportunity for ADA to push for GBV mainstreaming in WASH interventions. Its strengthened institutional knowledge and skills on GBV coordination have benefited ADA in proposal development, and during the project they were awarded funding for two new projects. ADA continues to compile and share Dollo GBV working group monthly updates and information on services provided and challenges in GBV programming with the National GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) in Somalia.

The knowledge and skills of ADA staff in GBV coordination were strengthened through joint monthly learning sessions, facilitated by Trócaire’s Programme Lead and Senior Humanitarian Protection Advisor. Areas of focus in these sessions included fostering collaborative leadership, managing meetings, resource mobilization, effective communication, GBV in Emergencies Minimum

Standards, GBV coordination, and an induction on the GBV AoR. The ADA team are registered members of the Global GBV AoR Community of Practice (COP), an online virtual community of GBV specialists working in humanitarian emergency settings, with a diverse mix of experiences, backgrounds, roles, types of organizations, geographic locations, nationalities, cultures, and ages. In this platform, GBV specialists meet to learn and share to deepen their understanding, strengthen abilities, and broaden their networks, with the shared aim of increasing the overall effectiveness of GBV prevention and response in emergencies.

Key lessons

It is critical to recognize the existing work and leadership of local WLOs in the GBV sector. Increasing support to the work of WLOs will enable them to continue to deliver lifesaving GBV services and to strengthen their organizational resilience in the long-term. High quality, flexible, long-term funding will support individual WLOs, and the wider eco-system of WLOs. It is also important to create an enabling environment for the voice and influence of WLOs in coordination, as this supports women’s participation and leadership in the GBV sector. Donors should look to support WLOs through direct funding and opportunities to promote and be guided by WLO leadership.

Key learnings from the project included the need to have a clear understanding of the coordination role from the very start. The ADA Director visited other clusters to understand how coordination meetings were run. Ensuring productive meetings involved having a clear and timed agenda and sharing it prior to the meeting; organizational leadership taking decisions when needed; and involving all members in the meeting by encouraging participation.

“... the power of coordinated collective action is what each partner can bring, so the entirety is greater than the individual parts. We know it will take sustained coordinated action to invest in and support the rights, resilience, and capacities of women and girls in the most difficult settings and ensure that every survivor receives the life-saving services they deserve.”

Yusra Ali Adan – Director, ADA

For further information, visit [ADA’s website](#), the [Resource Package on WLOs Leadership in GBV Coordination](#), and the [video testimony](#) from ADA’s experience in GBV coordination.